

Many of our churches possess clear evidence of the frequent use of painting, either in fresco or tempera—probably a mixture of both—on the vaulting, walls, and pillars. At Durham Cathedral, in the Galilee Chapel—at Canterbury Cathedral, also in the crypt; and there are traces of a picture in an arched recess in the choir at Preston Church, Sussex, at Mid Lavant Church, Sussex, and at Melcombe Horsey Church, Dorset; and many other specimens of painting have been discovered. Oil painting appears to have been seldom employed for mural decoration. Whether the mode employed was fresco, or mixed with tempera, is of little moment; we have unquestionable authority to prove, that painting was most extensively employed by the clergy and the architects of the middle ages, to the extent of entirely covering the interior of churches with pictures and ornamental colour. This mode of decoration is being partly revived in the restored Abbey of St. Denis, near Paris, and some other churches; in London, at the Temple Church; and it is stated to be the case at the Round Church, Cambridge.

It must not be omitted to mention the fact of the Painted Chamber at Westminster, and St. Stephen's Chapel, having been painted by Englishmen in the reign of Edward III. The remains of these pictures, which existed a few years ago, shewed them to have been brilliant in colour, and most interesting to the artist and antiquary.

In dwelling-houses, tapestry (which is painting with waxed instead of lime or white lead) was much used, probably from the increase of comfort by its warmth, the convenience of removing it from place to place, and the ease with which it was rolled up and packed away until wanted again.

The Reformation came, and with it the destruction of our ancient works of art. Sledgehammers battered to pieces saints, their shrines, their canopies—and what hammers could not effect, yellow-wash and white-wash completed. This taste became universal, and has to this hour been swallowing up every remnant of our ancient pictures.

Fanaticism and bigotry scared painting entirely out of our religious edifices; but it was found that decoration was still required in the royal palaces and the mansions of our nobility. Painting was then proposed, and at once adopted in its debased state; acres of surface were covered with oil painting, by Verrio, Laguerre, Thornhill, and others. Allegory became the rage; gods of the heathen mythology, heroes, ancient and modern, smiling complacently in the costume of Cæsar with the flowing wig of Charles II., and goddesses perched on brass clouds, clad in shot silks, and leering like the beauties of the merry monarch's court. Of such taste, the royal palaces and mansions of the nobility afford many examples.

Fresco at this time was nearly forgotten, or heard of but seldom. Guiseppe Borghese in 1750 painted some frescoes for Lord Le Despencer. Mr. Barker at Bath painted one. Rigaud, the royal academician, also painted in fresco; and Mr. Aglio, an artist from Italy, has, during a residence of forty years in this country, executed some frescoes at Moorfields Chapel; in the town-hall, Manchester; and the curved surface over the altar in the new Catholic chapel near the City-road.

The burning down of the Houses of Parliament was an event that, almost instantaneously, exposed the weakness of the British school of art in historical painting. Historical art had been nearly starved out of the country, by the indifference shewn for efforts in this style. Patrons felt high art had not been encouraged, concluded it could not exist in this country, and talked of sending for Germans! but as in this country it is usual to try the accused before final condemnation, trial exhibitions were solicited and granted, with the most favourable results. At the same time, his royal highness Prince Albert invited some of our most eminent artists to make trials in fresco, for a summer-house in the gardens of Buckingham Palace. As might have been expected, the success of these gentlemen differed, having to do with an entirely novel mode of proceeding, and with very limited capabilities compared with those of oil, to which they had been accustomed. But these trials, followed up by the exhibitions of fresco painting and cartoon drawing, held at Westminster Hall, sufficiently proved, that the

English school only requires encouragement to attain an equal rank with the continental schools of art; and the fresco executed by Mr. Dyce, in the House of Lords, as a specimen, appears to have given entire satisfaction to her Majesty's Commissioners of Fine Arts; so much so, that Messrs. Maclise, Cope, and Horsley, are commissioned to proceed with three other frescoes for the House of Lords. But an entire change in the subjects of patronage will be required, before high art can arrive at any degree of excellence in this country.

The lecturer then proceeded to cut the superfluous plaster, or intonaco, from the portion of the fresco painted during the preceding lecture, and directed his assistant to lay fresh plaster close up to the picture which remained. During the time the plaster was being laid, Mr. Buss explained the method of adapting the outlines, so as to coincide with and conceal the joints of the old and new plaster, and by diagrams exemplified the judicious and injudicious contrivance of these joints. When the intonaco had properly set, the lecturer proceeded with the background (having traced the forms from the cartoons), and in a few minutes, sufficiently covered the picture to shew the mode by which the artist in fresco joins the work of one day to that of another. He then stated, it must be quite evident that great skill and a completely arranged subject, are absolutely necessary to ensure success in fresco painting (which ought to be pure fresco without retouching), so that each day's work on a picture should be an complete in itself and in relation to the entire composition as not to require to be again touched. Our limits will not permit us to enter upon the arguments for and against the practice of retouching fresco, but it would appear that the pure state of fresco is far preferable to one that is retouched, for the conditions of permanency of colour. Freedom from gloss on the surface, and capability of cleaning (especially the latter) required by her Majesty's commissioners, can only be fully complied with by employing pure fresco. Encaustic, tempera, its modifications, and oil-painting, were then described and compared with each other, and references made to various works in these different methods of painting. To Sir Joshua Reynolds is due the merit of having explored the depths, and transparent richness, peculiar to an oil or varnish medium, which in this respect has ruined the English school above those of the continent; but a change in the public taste has been gradually brought about for light and delicate arrangements of colour, and effect of light and shade, produced most probably by the lighter style of architecture and decoration in use for domestic edifices for several years past. Of fresco applied to external decoration many specimens exist, and *sgrafio* or scratched work,—consisting of a thin coat of white plaster over a black ground, which white plaster being removed or scratched through, in forms similar to a hatched drawing, produced an effect approaching to bas-relief,—was also employed by Polidoro da Caravaggio on the exterior of buildings. But fresco was extensively employed on the outside of even private dwelling-houses, and among the eminent names of the artists who executed them, are those of Titian and Tintoretto. In Germany, the Isar gate, the pediment of the theatre at Munich, and other examples, exist of external painting.

In this country, Rigaud, a member of the Royal Academy, painted some frescoes on the outside of Sheringham's house, in Marlborough-street, and a few examples of modern external ornamental painting are to be met with, but surely an application of art which was not beneath the notice of Titian, Tintoretto, and the disciples of the school of the Caracci, in Italy, and of Rigaud, who was eminent in his day, might be made available to the artists of the present time.

Extraordinary advances have been made within a few years, in the internal and external architectural arrangements of houses for the purposes of trade. Architects of eminence have directed their attention to this subject, and some beautiful shops now adorn our towns; and a tradesman about to commence business on a grand scale might, by engaging an architect and a painter, have a beautiful design tastefully executed, at a cost much less in amount than the methods of advertisement resorted to in

almost every instance. When the splendour of the Parisian cafes is remembered, it must be admitted that latterly, in this country, painting has been but sparingly employed in aid of architecture.

Fresco is particularly adapted for a good effect in entrance-halls, colonnades, conservatories, piazzas, cloisters, pabels, and other large compartments either on the outside or inside of public or private edifices; and in the present crisis of art in this country, every exertion should be made to introduce this method of painting, by all who possess any power to do so. For without a liberal encouragement from the Government, or private or public encouragement, the present movement in art will pass away, comparatively impotent in working those changes in the English school, which are most earnestly desired by all who wish well to the arts of this country. Our public institutions, corporate bodies, colleges, and art-unions, possess great powers to advance the cause of high art. In this way the Town-hall at Elbfeldt, the Franciscan church at Stuttgart, and the town-hall at Frankfurt have been decorated with frescoes. It is to be hoped that great efforts will be made, in order to effect a permanent advance of historical art in England.

Historical art has, on this side of the channel, been synonymous with poverty; and the fate of Barry, Fuseli, Blake, Hilton, Briggs, and others, must be remembered with pain, sacrificed, as they were, in an endeavour to keep alive the expiring embers of historic art.

In all departments of science and literature England has maintained a proud position; and it cannot rationally be supposed, that with due encouragement in historic art, English artists would not equal those of other nations. In that department of art which has been encouraged in this country, they have ever been found equal to the demands on their talents. In portraiture, landscape, and pictures of social or domestic life, and in the art of engraving, this country may claim a superiority over other nations.

Let the artists of England have equal opportunities with those of Italy, France or Germany, and with the impetus afforded by the Royal Commission of Fine Arts, a school of historical painting will arise worthy of the country, and we shall hear no more of sending for a French or a German artist to depict the virtues of an Alfred, or the achievements of a Nelson or a Wellington.

DECORATIVE PROJECTIONS. METROPOLITAN BUILDINGS ACT.

SIR,—The award of the Official Referee, relative to projections of shop fronts, &c., published in your journal of the 14th instant, involves matter of the most serious importance, not only to the profession, but also to the owners of ground in the metropolis. Without reference to the particular case, the principle therein enunciated is no less than this,—that in almost every case of a rebuilding in the city of London, where every inch of ground is so valuable that the houses are split up into small tenements, the owner must, without compensation, or even without any adequate benefit to the public, as I shall subsequently shew, give up a portion of his ground, or forego all attempt at architectural decoration. The statement made in the award, that the rule has been "misapprehended by builders, and many district surveyors," the unwillingness of the Official Referee to act upon the assumed legal construction of the clauses in the case submitted, and your editorial remark at the conclusion, all evidently shew that the construction of the Act, suggested by the award, would, if correct, entail great injustice and injury on the profession.

I have alluded more particularly to the city of London, as the part of the metropolis where the effects of this award would be most severely felt; for there the "general line of fronts in the streets" are most frequently tangential with the line of the public way. Under this award, therefore, if a citizen is desirous of having a window-cap or cornice to his house (I will not at present allude to shop-fronts, which form a distinct class), he must set back his house 10 or 15 inches, as the case may be, in order that the said cornice should not overhang the public way. Suppose it done, and the house set back, what advantage is gained?